

Message Text

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TO THE WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SECTO 8045

NODIS/CHEROKEE

WHITE HOUSE: EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BRZEZINSKI
FROM THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT: EYES ONLY FOR WARREN CHRISTOPEHR AND PETER TARNOFF

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS) EG, US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH SYRIAN AND LEBANESE LEADERSHIP

1. I WILL WARP UP IN THIS ONE REPORT MY ACCOUNT OF FOUR
HOURS IN LEBANON WEDNESDAY, AND MY LONG TALKS HERE IN
DAMASCUS TODAY. LET ME BEGIN WITH THE TALKS HERE IN SYRIA
BECAUSE THEY ARE SO MUCH MORE DIRECTLY RELATED TO
THE PEACE PROCESS.

2. I SPENT ALMOST SIX HOURS TODAY IN BACK-TO-BACK MEETINGS
FIRST WITH FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND THEN IN A LONGER
SESSION WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD. I WAS WARMLY RECEIVED.
PRESIDENT ASSAD TOL ME HOW MUCH HE HAD ENJOYED HIS
MEETING WITH YOU IN GENEVA AND ASKED ME TO SEND YOU HIS
GREETINGS. I HAD A FULL OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS WITH
BOTH WHERE MATTERS NOW STAND AND HOW WE WOULD PROPOSE
TO PROCEED IF WE FIND GENERAL AGREEMENT ON OUR SUGGESTIONS.
THE DISCUSSIONS WERE THOUGHTFUL, AND MY COLLEAGUES TELL
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ME THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW TIMES THEY HAVE SEEN FOREIGN
MINISTER KHADDAM ALMOST COMPLETELY AVOID POLEMICAL
POSITIONS AND DIG INTO SUBSTANCE.

3. IN SHORT, THE SYRIANS WERE FRANK IN STATING THEIR
POSITIONS BUT ARE RESERVING FINAL JUDGMENT ON MOST
POINTS UNTIL THEY HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO CONSULT WITH THE

OTHER KEY ARAB GOVERNMENTS, AS THEY NOW PLAN TO DO AFTER MY VISITS HERE HAVE ENDED. THERE IS CERTAINLY NO LESSENING OF THEIR INTEREST IN WORKING CLOSELY WITH US, BUT THEY QUITE HONESTLY SAY THAT THEY ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE. UNLIKE SADAT, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CAUTION AND UNWILLINGNESS TO STICK NECKS OUT VERY FAR; BUT ASSAD SEEMS MORE REALISTIC THAN SADAT IN ASSESSING THE DIFFICULTIES AHEAD, HIS COMMITMENT TO THE PLO REMAINS STRONG, PARTLY OUT OF PERSONAL CONVICTION AND POSSIBLY--ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO HINT OF THIS HERE--BECAUSE THE SYRIANS HAVE MADE A DEAL WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON.

4. BELOW ARE THE MAIN POINTS I COVERED IN MY PRESENTATION TO EACH ALONG WITH WHAT I PERCEIVE FROM OUR LONG CONVERSATIONS TO BE THEIR ACTION:

A. BEGIN PROPOSALS. I GAVE THEM A COPY OF THE BEGIN PROPOSALS AND TOLD THEM OF BEGIN'S WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE ON ALL ISSUES BUT WITH THE CLEAR STATEMENT OF OPPOSITION TO WITHDRAWAL TO 1967 LINES, CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE, OR ATTENDANCE OF KNOWN PLO MEMBERS AT GENEVA. LIKE SADAT, NEITHER KHADDAM NOR ASSAD SAW MUCH IN THE BEGIN PROPOSALS TO DISCUSS. THEY TALKED ABOUT THEM MAINLY AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT THE ISRAELIS, PARTICULARLY THE NEW BEGIN GOVERNMENT, ARE NOT SERIOUS
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ABOUT PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. I MADE CLEAR THAT BEGIN LEFT WASHINGTON QUITE AWARE THAT WE DISAGREE WITH SOME OF HIS POSITIONS.

B. PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. I EXPLAINED THAT WE HAD COME TO THE AREA BELIEVING THAT THERE ARE TWO REALISTIC POSSIBILITIES FOR PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA--INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS IN A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION OR INCLUDING THEM IN A JORDANIAN NATIONAL DELEGATION. I TOLD ASSAD THAT SADAT IS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION AND BELIEVES THE PLO IS LIKELY TO REJECT THE IDEA OF JOINING A JORDANIAN DELEGATION. SADAT, THEREFORE, HAS PROPOSED THAT IN ADDITION TO OTHER NATIONAL DELEGATIONS, AN ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION BE FORMED TO REPRESENT PALESTINE. ASSAD SAW THIS IDEA AS WORTH CONSIDERING "BECAUSE IT IS NEW," BUT IT BECAME APPARENT DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM ONLY IF THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION WERE TRANSFORMED INTO THE DELEGATION REPRESENTING ALL OF THE ARABS RATHER THAN COMPLEMENTING NATIONAL DELEGATION. HE CONTINUES TO PREFER A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION.

C. THE FIVE PRINCIPLES. I REVIEWED THE FIVE PRINCIPLES WHICH WE HAVE DRAWN UP AS A STARTING POINT FOR DISCUSSIONS IN A PEACE CONFERENCE. LIKE SADAT, ASSAD PREFERS A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE TREATY RATHER THAN FURTHER PARTIAL STEPS, AND AT LEAST IN THIS FIRST REACTION HE HAD POSED NO OBJECTION TO THE TERM "PEACE TREATIES." ALSO LIKE SADAT, HE IS WILLING TO STATE THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON UN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, ALTHOUGH HE SUGGESTED THAT WE MIGHT WANT TO INCLUDE REFERENCE TO "ALL PERTINENT UN RESOLUTIONS" SINCE OTHERS MORE COMPLETELY DESCRIBE THE WHOLE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. AGAIN LIKE SADAT, HE IS QUITE WILLING TO ACCEPT LANGUAGE THAT DESCRIBES ONE OBJECTIVE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS AS THE TERMINATION OF BELLIGERENCY AND THE COMING OF A STATE OF PEACE,
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BUT HE SPOKE AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH INDESCRIBING WHY IT IS UNREASONABLE IN A PEACE TREATY TO TRY TO IMPOSE ON THE SIGNING PARTIES A FULL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. HE ACCEPTS THAT FACT THAT SUCH NORMALIZATION MAY WELL COME WITH TIME BUT HE REGARDS IT AS AN INFRINGEMENT ON SOVEREIGNTY THAT THE DETAILS OF THIS RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE SPELLED OUT IN A TREATY. I BELIEVE IN TIME THERE IS POSSIBILITY OF SOME GIVE ON THIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 SECTO 08045

NODIS/CHEROKEE

WHITE HOUSE: EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BRZEZINSKI
FROM THE SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT: EYES ONLY FOR WARREN CHRISTOPHER AND PETER TARNOFF

ISSUE ON THE PART OF THE SYRIANS. ON THE PRINCIPLE CONCERNING BOUNDARIES, HE WOULD PREFER A DIRECT ENDORSEMENT OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO THE PRE-1967 BOUNDARIES, AND HE STATED IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS SADAT HAD THAT "MINOR ADJUSTMENTS" IN THE BOUNDARIES WOULD ONLY APPLY TO THE WEST BANK -- NOT TO THE GOLAN OR SINAI. FINALLY, HE IS PLEASED TO SEE US TALKING ABOUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY, BUT PROBED FOR GREATER DETAIL ON HOW IT WOULD BE ESTABLISHED. ONE POINT HE DWELT ON WAS THAT IT WOULD BE "UNNATURAL" FOR THE ENTITY TO BE COMPLETELY DEMILITARIZED, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE REASONABLE TO HAVE DEMILITARIZED AREAS ALONG THE BORDERS.

D. TRUSTEESHIP. I SAID IN MY CONVERSATION WITH KHADDAM THAT WE HAD GIVEN CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT TO THE NEED FOR SOME SORT OF "TRUSTEESHIP" OVER THE WEST BANK FOR SOME PERIOD OF TIME LEADING UP TO AN ACT OF SELF-DETERMINATION. KHADDAM'S REACTION REVEALED THAT THERE IS SECRET

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A STRONG NEGATIVE FEELING ABOUT THE WORD "TRUSTEESHIP" BECAUSE IT CONNOTES AN INABILITY ON THE PART OF THE PALESTINIANS TO MANAGE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. THEREFORE, IN MY PRESENTATION TO ASSAD, I SPOKE INSTEAD OF THE NEED FOR "TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS" WHICH WOULD LEAD TOWARD AN ELECTION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WHICH WOULD PRESENT PROPOSALS FOR HOW THE WEST BANK WOULD BE GOVERNED AND WHAT ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS NEIGHBORS WOULD BE. ASSAD DID NOT REACT NEGATIVELY, BUT I THINK THIS IS AN IDEA WHICH THEY WILL NEED MORE TIME TO ABSORB. PART OF THE REASON IS THAT THEY HAVE READ IN THE ISRAELI PRESS ABOUT THE IDEA OF AN ISRAELI TRUSTEESHIP OVER THE WEST BANK, AND BOTH THE EGYPTIANS AND THE SYRIANS CURRENTLY FLATLY REJECT THE IDEA OF ANY ISRAELI PARTICIPATION BECAUSE THEY SEE THAT AS PERPETUATING AND LEGALIZING ISRAELI OCCUPATION. I POINTED OUT THAT ANY TRANSITION ON THE WEST BANK WOULD BE EXTREMELY COMPLEX AND THAT THEY MUST NOT CLOSE THEIR MINDS TO THE IDEA TO SOME KIND OF ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT UNDER GENERAL UN AUSPICES. THEY ALSO ARE IN FAVOR OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS, WHICH I STRESSED AS KEY TO OUR FIFTH PRINCIPLE.

E. U.S. CONTACT WITH THE PLO. I PRESENTED TO BOTH

KHADDAM AND ASSAD, AS I HAD TO SADAT, OUR PROPOSAL ON A STATEMENT WHICH THE PLO MIGHT MAKE ACCEPTING RESOLUTION 242 WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE RIGHT OF ALL STATES IN THE AREA TO EXIST APPLIES TO ISRAEL. THE SYRIANS HAD SEVERAL COUNTER SUGGESTIONS, AND I ASKED THEM TO GIVE ME THEIR THOUGHTS IN WRITING IN ORDER TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDING. I EXPLAINED WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT TO US SINCE WE AGREED WITH ISRAEL NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO AS LONG AS IT DOES NOT ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242. ONE
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OF THE MAIN SYRIAN CONCERNS IS THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL BE GIVING UP SOMETHING WITHOUT GETTING ANYTHING IN RETURN. I POINTED OUT IN BOTH CONVERSATIONS THAT THEY HAD PRESSED US HARD TO TALK WITH THE PLO SO THAT WE HAD THOUGHT REMOVING A BARRIER TO SUCH TALKS WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO THEM. I WOULD VENTURE TO GUESS THAT THEY WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE THE EGYPTIANS AND SAUDIS TAKE THE LEAD ON THIS RATHER THAN GET OUT IN FRONT THEMSELVES. I BELIEVE THAT WE WILL SEE ACTION IN THIS AREA. WE WILL KNOW BETTER WHEN I SEE SADAT ON AUGUST 11TH.

E. WORKING GROUP IN NEW YORK. AS YOU RECALL, SADAT IN OUR PRESS CONFERENCE IN ALEXANDRIA SAID HE HAD PROPOSED THAT WE SET UP A WORKING GROUP IN NEW YORK OR IN WASHINGTON IN EARLY SEPTEMBER TO WORK ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE PEACE CONFERENCE. I FOUND ON ARRIVAL HERE THAT THE SYRIANS AGAIN ARE ANGERED WITH THE EGYPTIANS FOR HAVING PUBLICIZED SUCH A PROPOSAL WITHOUT DISCUSSING IT WITH SYRIA, EVEN THOUGH KHADDAM HAD BEEN IN ALEXANDRIA JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE WE ARRIVED. THAT IRRITATION ACCOUNTS FOR SOME OF THE NEGATIVE SYRIAN FEELINGS ABOUT ESTABLISHING SUCH A WORKING GROUP. BUT ASSAD PROBABLY ALSO SEES IN IT AN EFFORT TO EVADE A FORMAL RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, THUS EXCLUDING PLO PARTICIPATION. SO FAR, I CAN REPORT ONLY A VERY NEGATIVE SYRIAN POSITION ON ANY SUCH FORMAL GROUP, ALTHOUGH ASSAD MADE CLEAR THAT HE WANTED TO REMAIN IN A VERY CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND WANTED TO INTENSIFY THE BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH US. I URGED ON HIM SEVERAL TIMES THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT LETTING OUR PREPARATIONS FOR GENEVA DRIFT ALONG ON GENERALITIES. I STRESSED THE FACT REPEATEDLY THAT THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROGRESS WAS AT HAND, AND IF WE LET IT SLIP AWAY THROUGH INACTION THE MOVEMENT MIGHT BE LOST FOR A LONG TIME.

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F. DRAFT TREATIES. IN CONNECTION WITH AVOIDING STAGNATION, I SAID I WOULD ASK EACH PARTY TO GIVE ME DRAFTS OF THEIR VIEWS OF A PEACE TREATY, WHICH I WOULD NOT SHOW TO ANYONE ELSE. I EXPLAINED THAT WE WOULD USE THESE DRAFTS TO DEVELOP OUR OWN DRAFT TEXT AS A BASIS FOR DISCUSSION. I STRESSED THAT I FELT SOME STEP LIKE THIS WOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO GIVING SUBSTANCE TO OUR PREPARATIONS FOR GENEVA.

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S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 SECTO 08045

NODIS /CHEROKEE

WHITE HOUSE: EYES ONLY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DR. BRZEZINSKI
FROM THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENT: EYES ONLY FOR WARREN CHRISTOPHER AND PETER TARNOFF

5. AT THE END OF MY CONVERSATION I MENTIONED TO ASSAD THE POSSIBILITY OF MY STOPPING AGAIN IN DAMASCUS ON MY LAST DAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN ORDER TO SHARE MY VIEWS ON HOW MATTERS STAND BASED ON MY TALKS IN ISRAELI, IF HE SO DESIRED. I DID NOT TELL HIM THAT SADAT IS INTERESTED IN SUCH A CONVERSATION. ASSAD WELCOMED THE IDEA, AND WE CONFIRMED THAT WE WOULD SCHEUDLE A BRIEF STOP.

6. DURING MY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS IN BEIRUT WEDNESDAY, I WENT OVER THE MAIN ISSUES IN LESS DETAIL. SARKIS SIMPLY REPORTED THE PLO POSITION AS IT HAD BEEN TOLD TO HIM, INSISTING ON THEIR OWN

PRESENCE AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE. HE THOUGHT THE PLO MIGHT BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE IF THEY HAD IN ADVANCE SOME ASSURANCES FROM THE US ON WHAT THEY MIGHT GET OUT OF A CONFERENCE. I EXPLAINED WHY WE COULD NOT TALK WITH THE PLO AS LONG AS THEY DID NOT ACCEPT RESOLUTION 242 AND GAVE HIM A COPY OF OUR FIVE PRINCIPLES AND THE PROPOSED STATEMENT FOR THE PLO TO ISSUE CONCERNING RESOLUTION

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242. I ALSO ASKED HIM TO GIVE ME A SUGGESTED PEACE TREATY TEXT INCORPORATING LEBANON'S VIEWS; HE SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTION, BUT HIS FOREIGN MINISTER LATER WAS NOT SO READY TO COMMIT HIMSELF. BOTH SARKIS AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER INDICATED THEY WOULD BE HAPPY TO MEET WITH ME IN THE US BUT WANTED TO RESERVE ON A "WORKING GROUP" UNTIL THEY HEARD THE VIEWS OF ASSAD.

7. I DISCUSSED SOUTHERN LEBANON BOTH IN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS. THE LEBANESE WERE CAUTIOUS IN TALKING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A UN FORCE UNTIL THEY HEARD SPECIFICALLY WHAT BEGIN HAD IN MIND--A BORDER FORCE OR A FORCE STATIONED IN THE HEART OF THE SOUTH BETWEEN THE CONTENDING LEBANESE FACTIONS. IN DAMASCUS TODAY, ASSAD DEFERRED TO THE LEBANESE BUT MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF ANY UN FORCE WERE TO BE STATIONED IN SOUTH LEBANON, IT SHOULD BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF BLOCKING ISRAELI INCURSIONS, NOT FOR INTRA-LEBANESE USE.

8. FINALLY, I INFORMED BOTH THE LEBANESE AND THE SYRIANS OF OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE PLANS FOR LEBANON AND BOTH SEEMED PLEASED.

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